

PADM 5353: Public Administration Capstone Seminar

(Fall 2026)

Course Description:

Course provides a capstone experience for students to address an important policy and administrative issue. Students draw on coursework and experiences of their education to develop specific recommendations for design, implementation, and evaluation of this project task. We will also cover significant topics in research methods and statistics that relate to probability, inferential statistics, analysis of nominal and ordinal data, and regression analysis.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Integrate graduate-level knowledge in the context of an applied field project.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking skills.
3. Apply the appropriate tools and techniques to select a focused, manageable research topic.
4. Apply research methods to move from a research problem to identifying and gathering necessary, sufficient, and appropriate data (“quantitative literacy”).
5. Apply appropriate analytical capacities for policy and organizational analysis.
6. Demonstrate advanced written and oral communication skills (“information literacy”) including report writing competencies, for a variety of audiences.
7. Solve problems using probability theory.
8. Create hypotheses and measure differences between groups using inferential statistics.
9. Analyze nominal- and ordinal-level data.
10. Solve problems using regression analysis.

Required Textbooks:

Meier, K.J., J.L. Brudney, and J. Bohte (2015). *Applied Statistics for Public and Nonprofit Management*. 9th edition. Stamford CT: Cengage [ISBN-13: 978-1-285-73723-2]

Polonsky, M. J., and D. S. Waller (2019). *Designing and Managing a Research Project*. 4th edition. Los Angeles: Sage. [ISBN: 978-1-5443-1646-8]

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 6th ed. Washington, DC: APA. [ISBN: 978-1-4338-0561-5]

Brief Semester Overview

Week 1: Project Management (The Foundations) and Probability

Week 1 (August 24-29):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapters 1-2, Introduction and Choosing a Topic

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 7, The Normal Probability Distribution

Students will need to think about the nature of their paper. Will the paper primarily be a policy-oriented paper, or a process/organizational change or reform paper? Will the paper primarily focus on planning, implementation, or evaluation of a program or a policy? Will students be working with an actual government on a problem – in which case they will need to have a department head, key leader, or their own supervisor as a contact – or will the paper be more theoretical and academic in nature?

Students will turn in a “scope of work memo” describing the topic and strategies for researching this topic. This is a plan, at this point.

Students will begin the search for literature related to their topic. Students should access hard copies or electronic journals or magazines and begin to accumulate sources or references for their paper.

Also, there will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 7, this week.

If you are collecting data to use in your final paper, you should start collecting the data as soon as possible.

Week 2 (August 30-Sept. 5):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 3, The Role of the Supervisor

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 8, The Binomial Probability Distribution

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 8, this week

Week 3 (Sept. 6-12):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 4, Group Work, Group Dynamics, and the Role of Conflict

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 9, Some Special Probability Distributions.

Although you will not be working on a group project in this course, the material in this chapter may be helpful to you as you work on groups projects that require teamwork in the workplace.

Students will have collected and will begin to read 10 articles from journals or magazines for the paper. Students will share those 10 sources in a list of references and provide to the instructor.

There will also be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 9, this week

Weeks 4-7: Project Definition and Contextualizing Activities (Undertaking the Research) and Inferential Statistics

Week 4 (Sept. 13-19):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 5, Ethical Considerations

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 10, Introduction to Inference

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 10, this week

Week 5 (Sept. 20-26):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapters 6 and 7, Planning the Research Project and Literature Review

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 11, Hypothesis Testing

Students should turn in two-page reports, or “reading reviews,” on five of their sources (one-and-one-half to two double-spaced pages for each source).

There will also be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 11, this week.

Week 6 (Sept. 27-Oct.3):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 8, Data Gathering

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 12, Estimating Population Proportions

Students should turn in two-page reports, or “reading reviews” on five additional sources.

There will also be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 12, this week.

Week 7 (October 4-10):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 9, Qualitative Data Collection and Issues in Analysis

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 13, Testing the Difference between Two Groups

Students should begin the merging of their individual articles into a tight literature review.

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 13, this week.

Weeks 8-10: Communicating the Results (and Analysis of Nominal and Ordinal Data)

Week 8 (October 11-17):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 10, Quantitative Data Analysis

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 14, Construction and Analysis of Contingency Tables

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 14, this week.

Week 9 (October 18-24):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 11, Presenting the Results

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 15, Aids for the Interpretation of Contingency Tables

Students should complete the literature review for the paper.

There will also be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 15, this week.

If you are using data in your final paper, now is the time to start running your data analysis in preparation for presenting and explaining your results in the final version of the paper.

Week 10 (October 25-31):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 12, Identifying the Implications and Establishing Recommendations

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 16, Statistical Control Table Analysis

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 16, this week.

Weeks 11-15: Finalizing the Paper and Writing the Report (and Regression Analysis)

Week 11 (November 1-7):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 13, Writing the Report

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 17, Introduction to Regression Analysis

Students should provide an initial articulation of their data collection and data analysis strategies for the paper, if they have not already done so.

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 17, this week.

Week 12 (November 8-14):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 14, Oral Presentations

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 18, The Assumptions of Linear Regression

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 18, this week.

Week 13 (November 15-21):

Polonsky and Waller, Chapter 15, Concluding Remarks

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 20, Multiple Regression

Students should begin writing the first draft of their papers, if they have not done so by now. Outlines of papers should be well developed by this time.

There will be a homework problem from Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 20, this week.

The week of November 22 to 28 is the week of Thanksgiving. No assignments this week.

Week 14 (November 29-December 5):

Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, Chapter 21, Regression Output and Data Management

Students should continue writing the paper. By now, the paper should be virtually complete and it is a matter of “putting the flesh on the bones.”

Week 15: Finals Week (December 6-12)

Final papers are due Wednesday, December 9, 11:59 pm

Videos explaining the Paper are due Saturday, December 12, 11:59 PM

Assignments and Grading

Assignment 1	Scope of work memo	5 points
Assignment 2	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 3	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 4	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 5	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 6	Reading Review #1	12.5 points
Assignment 7	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 8	Reading Review #2	12.5 points
Assignment 9	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 10	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 11	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 12	Literature Review	50 points
Assignment 13	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 14	Homework problem	10 points
Assignment 15	Homework problem	7 points
Assignment 16	Homework problem	5 points
Assignment 17	Homework problem	7 points
Assignment 18	Final Report	75 points
Assignment 19	Video for Final Report	5 points
Total =		279 points

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100% -- 251.1-279 points

B = 80-89% -- 223.2-251 points

C = 70-79% -- 195.3-223.1 points

D = 60-69% -- 167.4-195.2 points

F = < 60% -- < 167.4 points

Assignment Details

1. Scope of Work Memo

Students prepare a scope of work memo that details the project activities, due in week 1.

2. Working Paper (WP) or Reading Review Summaries

This assignment allows students to document and summarize material from at least 10 sources (articles, interviews, reports, books, etc.). In weeks 5 and 6, students will submit working papers on at least five sources each week. These summaries, as well as a copy of the article (or other source) will be submitted to the instructor.

3. Literature Review

Due in Week 9, this assignment is intended to reinforce in-depth understanding of the readings. It is not a summary of the readings. Authors should explore theoretical and practical concepts in the readings to identify their strengths, limitations, and benefits. Authors should identify how the approach/model/theory/framework may apply to practical situations. The assignment is intended to continue the development of critical and analytical thinking and writing. The literature review should present a thesis (an argument or viewpoint) about a particular practice, theory, or set of theories. The thesis statement must be included in the first paragraph and must take one of these forms:

1. This paper will demonstrate that the “market theory of efficiency” is not a clear measurement of efficiency when compared to the “polis” view of efficiency.

2. This paper examines Meg Greenfield's experiences reporting Washington politics in light of Deborah Stone's discussion of the "distortion of facts in the polis." The discussion will demonstrate that . . .
3. This paper will examine the effect of the absence of clarity about goal priorities. This paper will show that when goal priorities of the organization are not clear and understood by all executives and senior managers, the organization will not be successful.
4. This paper will show that no matter how much officials talk about the importance of performance measurement, nonprofit and public managers will not be able successfully to adopt and implement the practice.

The paper should demonstrate that the student can related the content to other concepts presented in the class. It is important to demonstrate the ability to write clear, simple, organized prose that is easily understood by any reader.

Although you may include more sources in the final paper, the literature review assignment will ask the student to provide a thorough review of relevant literature and a "complete" bibliography, to create a coherent background in support of project objectives. The review concludes with research questions and hypotheses/propositions.

4. Final Report

This report integrates and extends prior documents to provide a comprehensive report. You may submit a first draft to the instructor and to a government contact, if you have one. The final paper should include:

- Executive summary
- Scope of work memo
- Literature review
- Research design
- Next steps

The Final Report will be graded on these Criteria:

1. The project itself will consist of a substantial project that offers an intellectual contribution to the field and/or a practical contribution to the organization or jurisdiction under which the project is undertaken.

2. The project will be well-researched, with a relatively large number of high-quality published resources being cited in the paper.
3. Students must demonstrate a capstone level of proficiency in critical thinking. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (the AACU), “critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.” On the Value Rubric for Critical Thinking created by the AACU, grading will be focused on the student’s ability to “select and use information to investigate a point of view or conclusion” (the use of evidence). A “capstone” level of proficiency would be demonstrated by showing that “information is taken from sources with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.”
4. Students must demonstrate a capstone level of proficiency in information literacy. According to the AACU, information literacy is “the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand.” On the Value Rubric for Information Literacy created by the AACU, grading will be focused on the student’s ability to “use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.” A “capstone” level of proficiency would be demonstrated by showing the ability to “communicate, organize, and synthesize information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth.”
5. Students must demonstrate a capstone level of proficiency in critical thinking. According to the AACU, quantitative literacy is “a habit of mind, competency, and comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong Quantitative Literacy skills possess the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate.” On the Value Rubric for Quantitative Literacy created by the AACU, grading will be focused on the student’s “ability to make and evaluate important assumptions in estimation, modelling, and data analysis.” A “capstone” level of proficiency would be demonstrated when the student “explicitly describes assumptions and provides compelling rationale for why each assumption is appropriate. The student shows awareness that confidence in final conclusions is limited by the accuracy of the assumptions.”

Final Video Explaining Project

Students will need to turn in to me a video explaining the project that resulted in the written paper. What was your topic? Why did you choose this topic? What did you find with your research? Was it what you expected to find? Did you use data? If so, briefly describe the data and the methods you used. What recommendations did you make to your superior or to a hypothetical superior or policy maker based on your research? What is left undone by your study, or what would you do next or advise others to do to follow up on this research? I expect the video to be 5 minutes long, but if you need some extra time 5-7 minutes will work.

Final Note on Written Assignments

All written assignments will have the following minimum requirements, which are in keeping with standards of the American Psychological Association (APA), which will serve as the style manual for the paper: Paper should be double-spaced; use of 12 pt. font; numbering of all pages; complete citation of sources by author and date, including page number for direct references or quotations; use of a reference section; and careful, well-edited writing.

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University Mandated Statements

Syllabus Information

A syllabus is a statement of intent by the course instructor to clearly explain what a student must do and the timeline for such tasks to complete the course. A syllabus protects students from arbitrary or untimely changes in course requirements and due dates.

UT Tyler faculty shall provide students with a course syllabus in the Syllabus Module within Canvas (UT Tyler's Learning Management System). Faculty may also distribute syllabi in class if desired. Within the Syllabus Module, faculty provide students with their contact information and course-specific information. Undergraduate and Online Education staff will update the Student Resources and University Policies and Information pages in the Syllabus Module each semester. Undergraduate faculty are also required to provide their department/school with their syllabi for posting on the UT Tyler website as required by HB 2504. In the syllabi provided to

the department, faculty may note that Student Resources and University Policies and Information are in Canvas.

Syllabi for concurrently taught undergraduate and graduate courses (e.g., CENG 4314/5314) must clearly describe the different expectations of graduate students that are substantively and progressively more advanced than those of the undergraduates. The delineation of expectations can occur in a separate graduate syllabus or a combined syllabus.

Each syllabus **MUST** contain the following minimum information.

1. Instructor name, office, phone, and email contact
2. Office hours (3 hours minimum per week, plus by appointment)
3. TA Contact (if appropriate)
4. Course Overview
5. Student Learning Outcomes
6. Required Textbooks and Readings and Recommended (if applicable)
7. Special Course Notes (e.g., external websites or resources required, proctoring requirements, field trips, etc.)
8. Assignments with weights/point values and grading scales. Brief descriptions of significant assignments are required.
9. Late Work and Make-Up Exam expectations
10. Attendance policy (optional)
11. Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

The following information is provided within the Syllabus Module related to Student Resources and University Policies and Information.

Student Resources:

Faculty can update student resources to provide additional supports appropriate for each course.

Resources to assist you in the course

- UT Tyler Student Accessibility and Resource (SAR) Office (provides needed accommodations to students with document needs related to access and learning)
- UT Tyler Writing Center
- The Mathematics Learning Center
- UT Tyler PASS Tutoring Center
- UT Tyler Supplemental Instruction
- Upswing (24/7 online tutoring) - covers nearly all undergraduate course areas
- Robert Muntz Library and Library Liaison
- Canvas 101 (learn to use Canvas, proctoring, Unicheck, and other software)
- Digital Support Toolkit (for supported courses only. Students are automatically enrolled in the toolkit for supported courses)
- LIB 422 -- Computer Lab where students can take a proctored exam
- The Career Success Center

- UT Tyler Testing Center
- Office of Research & Scholarship Design and Data Analysis Lab

Resources available to UT Tyler Students

- UT Tyler Counseling Center (available to all students)
- TAO Online Support Center (online self-help modules related to mental & emotional health)
- Military and Veterans Success Center (supports for our military-affiliated students)

UT Tyler Patriot Food Pantry

UT Tyler Financial Aid and Scholarships

UT Tyler Registrar's Office

Office of International Programs

Title IX Reporting

Patriots Engage (available to all students. Get engaged at UT Tyler.)

University Policies and Information

Withdrawing from Class - Students are allowed to withdraw (drop) from a course through the University's Withdrawal Portal. Texas law prohibits students who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. The number includes courses dropped at other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Make sure to consider the impact withdrawing from any course has on your academic progress as well as the financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and financial aid for additional guidance. **CAUTION #1:** Withdrawing before census day does not mean students receive a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. **CAUTION #2:** All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms.

Final Exam Policy: Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members are required to maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy: If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete course requirements by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The I grade may be assigned in lieu of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course;

(b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average for a student.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to complete the work for the course within the time limit, the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has not been assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F or to NC, if the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis.

Grade Appeal Policy: - UT Tyler's Grade Appeal policy requires the completion of a Grade Appeal form for this action to take place. The grade appeal begins with the instructor of the course. If a student does not agree with the decision of the instructor, the student may then move the appeal to the department chair/school director for that course. If the student is still dissatisfied with the decision of the chair/director, the appeal moves to the Dean of the College offering that course, who has the final decision. Grade appeals must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade. The Grade Appeal form is found on the Registrar's Form Library.

Disability/Accessibility Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), The University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If a student has a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, the student is encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact the student when the application has been submitted and schedule an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079

Military Affiliated Students: UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for military-affiliated students are in the Military and Veterans Success Center (MVSC). The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

- Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct: The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that “Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.” Therefore, we enforce the Student Conduct and Discipline policy in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).
- FERPA - UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in University Policy 5.2.3. The course instructor will follow all requirements in protecting your confidential information.
- Recording of Class Sessions: Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in the course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in the course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities: All courses follow the practices related to approved absences as noted by the Student Manual of Operating Procedures (Sec. 1 -501).

Absence for Religious Holidays: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious holiday are requested to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of the semester.

Campus Carry: We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in all courses. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.